



*This is the last in our series on gaining confidence in our faith, to inspire us to live more intentionally for Jesus. It is also Advent Sunday, when we look backwards with thankfulness for the first coming of God to earth at Christmas and also forwards to His second coming at the end of Time. But what and where is heaven? Read **2 Corinthians 5: 1 – 10**.*

Contrasting our World with Heaven:

- **Worldly reality is:**
 - Crooked. Its politico-economic values and objectives are increasingly amoral and even immoral.
 - Wrong. Lust for money and power leads to jealousy, abuse, fury, gang violence and war.
 - Broken. Our beautiful natural world and its inhabitants are plundered for gain. The animals eat each other.
- **Heavenly reality is:**
 - Straight. Moral integrity prevails and is measured against the Word of God.
 - Right. Perfect 'rightness' is summed up in the Hebrew word *Shalom* which we translate as *Peace*. But *Shalom* is more than the absence of war or the absence of sibling rivalry on a long journey! It implies the restoration of human relationships to a peace where all people delight in God and walk with Him. Every ethnicity is treasured and shines with moral beauty, excellence of character and perfect fidelity. '.... Over it all reigns a God of unspeakable holiness who draws everyone towards Him ..' *John Otrberg*
 - Whole. The whole created order will be stunningly restored. The lion will lie down with the lamb.

Heavenly reality is not a place in the sky. It is a dimension existing in parallel with the world and will continue in future
Heavenly reality is what eye has not seen and ear has not heard. Heavenly reality is what no mind has conceived of, but it is what God has prepared for those who love Him. **1 Corinthians 2: 9-10**.

Church, be confident! Heaven is on its way!

- Paul explains how it is faith that gives us the confidence to know that God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will also raise us with Jesus – *we are in Him and He in us* - **2 Cor. 4: 14** and *John 14: 1-4*.
- **2 Cor. 5: 2,5,6,8**: Paul looks forward to eternal glory and life with a heavenly body (*variously described as his 'tent', 'building' or 'house'*) and encourages us with the thought that heaven is God's destiny for us! Paul knew that his confidence in the End of Time had implications for how he lived his life. Here are two of them:

It gave him a Powerful Perspective.

- Paul was living in an increasingly hostile environment for Christians. He and many others were repeatedly arrested, flogged nearly to death, imprisoned for their faith and killed for proclaiming that Jesus is LORD.
- **2 Cor. 4: 8, 16-18**. These sufferings are 'light and momentary troubles' in cf. with his confidence in heaven.

It gave him a passionate Purpose.

- **2 Cor. 5: 9-11**. Paul's convictions about the future give him a great sense of what the purpose of his life is in the here and now: to honour Jesus and to persuade others to do the same because Jesus is returning as Judge
- Paul was being judged by the worldly standards of the Corinthians as ineloquent, unqualified, without proper funding arrangements and horribly scarred (because of the floggings!) and therefore not worth listening to.
- Paul is unafraid of human judgement because he knows the End of Time is in the same hands as those of the One who was crucified for his sins. The coming Judge has been under judgement **2 Cor. 5:21**. He has already died our death so we can belong in the new heaven and the new earth when the Time comes for His *Shalom*.
- Paul is compelled by God's love to be His ambassador and to spread the message of reconciliation. **Vv. 14-20**.

Heavenly reality gives us a passionate purpose. Church, be Confident!

- To share this Good news with others – often the most effective 'evangelism' is done by a simple invitation to 'come with me'. **Eg. John 4:29; 1:41-2**. There are all sorts of Christmassy events to invite people to this time of the year and a new Alpha Course this January. **Heaven is on its way! The Lion will lie down with the Lamb.**

Questions for discussion

1. *Do we believe there is a heaven? Do we view it with fear and trepidation or with hope and expectation?*
2. *In what way do we feel 'hard pressed' as our part of the world is becomes more hostile to Christians?*
3. *Does our confidence in Christ and in heaven help us to rely on a heavenly perspective when maltreated?*
4. *How do we communicate to people that any confidence we have comes from Christ's sacrifice for us, from the presence of the Holy Spirit within us and the certainty of eternal life in a new heaven and a new earth!?*
5. *Has your understanding of heavenly reality changed through this sermon and our discussion?*